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PLANETARY PHENOMENA FOR MARCH AND APRIL, 1919

BY MALCOLM McNEILL

PHASES OF THE MOON, PACIFIC TIME

New Moon....	Mar. 2, 3 ^h 11 ^m A.M.	First Quarter...April 7, 4 ^h 39 ^m A.M.
First Quarter...	" 8, 7 14 P.M.	Full Moon..... " 15, 12 25 A.M.
Full Moon.....	" 16, 7 41 A.M.	Last Quarter... " 23, 3 21 A.M.
Last Quarter...	" 24, 12 34 P.M.	New Moon..... " 29, 9 30 P.M.
New Moon....	" 31, 1 5 P.M.	

The Sun passes the vernal equinox and spring begins at 8 A. M. March 21, Pacific Time.

Mercury passed superior conjunction with the Sun and became an evening star on February 23, but does not attain a sufficient distance for naked eye visibility until after the first week of March. It then sets about an hour after sunset and may be seen if weather conditions are very good. The interval does not fall below an hour during the rest of the month and at the time of greatest east elongation, March 21, it is about an hour and one-half. The March greatest east elongation is much smaller than the average since it occurs only a week after the planet passes perihelion. Conditions for visibility will be about as good at the next greatest east elongation occurring in July, altho the spring greatest east elongations are usually the best of the year for naked-eye observations. After passing elongation *Mercury* approaches the Sun quite rapidly, reaching conjunction and becoming a morning star on April 7. By the end of the month it has nearly reached greatest west elongation, and rises nearly an hour before sunrise. On March 11 *Mercury* is in conjunction with *Mars*, the latter planet passing about 1° to the south.

Venus remains an evening star, gradually drawing away from the Sun and setting later, on March 1 not quite two hours after sunset and on April 30 rather more than three hours. Altho by no means at its greatest brilliancy, which it will not reach until August, it is, after the Sun and Moon, easily the most conspicuous object in the sky. It moves during the two months not quite 60° northward and eastward from *Pisces*, thru *Aries*, into the western part of *Taurus*. About the middle of April it passes between the *Pleiades* and *Hyades* groups in *Taurus*.

Mars remains an evening star, setting thruout the two months' period at a few minutes after seven o'clock local mean time. The

Sun is, however, rapidly overtaking it in their common eastward motion and their apparent distance diminishes from about 15° on March 1 to only a little more than 2° on April 30, a distance far too small for naked-eye view of the planet; indeed it will be hardly possible to see *Mars* even on April 1 unless weather conditions are exceptionally favorable. Its actual distance from the Earth increases slightly and consequently there is a small loss of brightness, but it is scarcely noticeable. It moves about 43° eastward and 17° northward from *Pisces* into *Aries*, and on March 6 passes less than one degree south of the vernal equinox.

Jupiter is still in fine position for evening observation, remaining above the horizon until after 3 A. M. on March 1, and setting shortly before midnight on April 30. On March 2 it ceases to move westward and begins to move eastward among the stars of the constellation *Gemini*. The whole distance moved during the two months is about 6° , and at the close of the period it is a few degrees south and west of *Castor* and *Pollux*.

Saturn is also in fine position for evening observation, having passed opposition with the Sun on February 14. On March 1 it does not set until about 6 A. M., and on April 30 at about 2 A. M. It moves about 2° westward in the constellation *Leo* during the two months, away from *Regulus*, *Alpha Leonis*, the brightest star in the constellation, but its distance at the end of April is only about 4° . Its westward motion ceases on April 23.

Uranus is now a morning star, having passed conjunction with the Sun on February 17. On April 1 it rises not quite two hours before sunrise, but as it is only about as bright as the faintest stars visible to the naked eye, it will hardly be possible to see it until summer.

Neptune, too faint for naked-eye view, remains in the constellation *Cancer*. It is on the meridian at about 10 P. M. on March 1, and at about 6 P. M. on April 30.